

## David Oppenheimer writing in SUPPORT of House Bill No. 6026

I am supporting bill 6026 . I am selecting one argument of the many that exist to back this bill and that argument is that Rhode Island can find better, less harmful places to invest its pension fund. According to the State Department (1), the sale of U.S. military weaponry around the world topped \$175 billion during this current fiscal year. These weapons sales most often have disastrous consequences, destabilizing entire regions, compromising human rights, and undermining human flourishing while helping to drive the global growth in military spending.

For example, recent weapons sales to Saudi Arabia in support of their war on Yemen, which the UN has called the world's largest humanitarian crisis for over three years, resulted in the unconscionable and all too common targeting of civilians, including weddings, hospitals, and even a school bus full of children.(2,3,4,5) Between 2015 and 2019, a total of 73 percent of Saudi Arabia's arms imports came from America. (6)

But the arms the US has sold to Saudi Arabia and the UAE are not used solely by the US backed Saudi coalition. Investigations made in February, 2019 traced US- made equipment sold to the Saudis and UAE to non-state fighters on the ground in Yemen, including Al-Qaeda linked fighters, hardline Salafi militias and the Houthi rebels, universally cited by the Trump and Biden administrations as Iranian proxies, in violation of arms sales law.

Furthermore, the flood of weapons into Yemen have aided armed conflict within areas fully under the control of the side the US has backed in the Yemeni war. In southern Yemen, which is under the control of the Saudi and US backed Yemeni government, separatist militia backed by the UAE have been fighting militia backed by the Saudis, both using weapons manufactured in the US. (7)

To summarize, US arms have helped perpetrate the slaughter of innocent Yemenis in the north at the hands of the Saudi/UAE coalition backed by US. Some of these arms have fallen into hands of the side US-backed forces are fighting against and into the hands of Al Qaeda and other non-state militia, And finally, they have also been used in what is essentially a war within a war in southern Yemen, where a civil war has broken out within the side backed by the US, where both sides are fighting using American made arms.

We can see similarly destabilizing, disastrous consequences of US weapons sales closer to home in the western hemisphere.

In Mexico and numerous countries in Central America, with high murder rates that exceed our own, the majority of these homicides are firearm-related, and 70 percent of guns seized from criminals in Mexico traced by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) come from the US. (8) Almost 41 percent of guns seized in the Northern Triangle originate in the US, including almost half the guns in El Salvador. (9) So many of the people crowding our southern border trying to get into the US, are fleeing weapons made in the US that have found their way, legally or illegally into Latin America.

There are better, less harmful ways the state of Rhode Island can invest its pension fund money.

1) U.S. Department of State, [U.S. Arms Transfers Increased by 2.8 Percent in FY 2020 to \\$175.08 Billion](#)

2) [Global military expenditure sees largest annual increase in a decade.](#)

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

3) U.S. Department of State, [U.S. Arms Transfers Increased by 2.8 Percent in FY 2020 to \\$175.08 Billion](#)

4) The Guardian, [Saudi-led coalition strike kills at least 20 at wedding in Yemen - officials](#)

5) AP News Report, [Over 130 attacks on medical facilities in Yemen War](#)

6) Amnesty, *Bombing of schools by Saudi Arabia-led coalition a flagrant attack on future of Yemen's children*

7) CNN, *American weapons ended up in the wrong hands in Yemen. Now they're being turned on the US-backed government*

8) Human Rights Watch, *Yemen: Coalition Bus Bombing Apparent War Crime*

9) Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *USA and France dramatically increase major arms exports; Saudi Arabia is largest arms importer, says SIPRI*